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Life and Immortality brought to light through the Goſpel; or, The Promiſes of God the only Foundation of our future Hopes.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

HUNTINGDON,

AT THE

VISITATION

OF THE

Rev. Mr. Archdeacon JENNER,

On the Second of MAY, 1759.

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Who hath abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.

AMONG the numerous advantages Christianity enjoys, above any other religious institution, this is not the least, that it chears and supports the soul of man, under the miseries of life and the terrors of death, with the comfortable assurance of a glorious immortality. For this happy discovery we are indebted to the Gospel. Great stress is laid by the Apostle, throughout every part of his writings, upon the particular point of time when this discovery was made, to raise the gratitude and esteem of men to the Gospel of Christ, which suggested such glorious hopes, and gave them these exceeding great and precious promises. It was not the intention of St. *Paul* in these words to compare the evidences for a future state, which mankind had before the publication of the Gospel, with the evidences which the Gospel brings, and then give the preference to the Christian revelation. It was beneath the dignity of an Apostolical pen to descend to such trivial niceties as these. What the Apostle asserts is this;

 that

that the gracious deſign of God to reſtore mankind to the happineſs they had forfeited by the tranſgreſſion of *Adam*, had been formed and fixed in the divine councils before the foundation of the world, but was then firſt publiſhed by the preaching of the Goſpel: and I ſhould preſume, the warmeſt advocates of the light of nature will not diſpute this aſſertion of the Apoſtle, or venture to affirm it was known before. Indeed all our hopes of future happineſs do ſo entirely depend upon the promiſes which God has made us through Chriſt, and the particular method which God had choſen of reconciling the world unto himſelf by the death of his Son was a myſtery ſo entirely hidden from ages and generations, that life and immortality may moſt truly be ſaid to be brought to light through the Goſpel, ſince it is not only revealed by the Goſpel light, but is moreover propoſed upon the Goſpel terms. Hence St. *Paul* calls it *the hope of the Goſpel*; *the hope laid up in heaven, which they heard in the word of the truth of the Goſpel*; and *the hope of eternal life, which God promiſed before the foundation of the world, but hath in due times manifeſted his word through preaching*.

Theſe, and ſundry other paſſages to the ſame effect, if they mean any thing, muſt mean this, that the doctrine of eternal life is ſo peculiar to the Chriſtian diſpenſation, that the world firſt heard it by the preaching of the Goſpel, and could not hear it any other way: it is an hope, which the Goſpel, and the Goſpel alone, could give; an hope utterly unknown both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*,

tiles, and which neither the Law of *Moſes*, nor the Religion of Nature, if any ſuch thing there is, had any notion of, nor any pretenſions to *.

Having cleared the way thus far, we may advance one ſtep farther, and directly aſſert, that all our knowledge of a future ſtate was originally derived from revelation; that the certainty of it ever did, and ever will, ſtand upon the foundation of faith, which is the only evidence of things not ſeen.

It is, I think, univerſally allowed, that if *Adam* had continued innocent, he would have been immortal; for (with reverence be it ſpoken) it can hardly be thought ſuitable to the majeſty of God, to threaten death, with great ſolemnity, as the puniſhment of ſin, if man muſt have died whether he had ſinned or no. Upon this ſuppoſition then, there could be no natural notion of a future ſtate, becauſe there was no ſuch ſtate in nature. The preſent ſtate, in which God had placed him, was deſigned to be his portion, and the lot of his inheritance for ever: and when, through the ſuggeſtion of the Devil, in defiance of God's threats, and in contempt of his authority, he had eaten the forbidden fruit; if we may judge of his ſentiments by his behaviour at that time, he had no hopes of mercy in this world, or the next; but, conſcious of his guilt, he ſtood trembling before his judge, expecting the immediate execution of the ſentence, which

* By a Religion of Nature, I mean, a ſyſtem of duties offered to the world as deductions of reaſon, and received merely upon the reaſonableneſs of the thing.

he vainly endeavoured to ſhun by hiding himſelf from the preſence of God. Natural as it may be thought for criminals under the conviction of guilt to attempt an eſcape, we muſt acknowledge it to be an act of deſpair; and he, who endeavours to fly from juſtice, does thereby confeſs he has no hopes of mercy. View then *Adam*'s behaviour in this light, judge it by this rule, and then ſay, what hopes he had, or could have, of eſcaping death in this world, or ſurviving it in another. Here indeed the mercy of God interpoſed, and gave thoſe hopes to fallen man, which nothing elſe, within him or without him, could ſuggeſt. He came with deſign to diſappoint the malice of the Tempter, and vindicate the authority of his laws, by puniſhing the offence without deſtroying the offender; and the Divine wiſdom ſo happily contrived the method of our redemption, that ſatisfaction was made to the juſtice of God, while room was left for the exerciſe of his mercy; ſin was puniſhed, and the ſinner ſaved. *The Seed of the Woman ſhall bruiſe the Serpent's head*, is the word of comfort to *Adam* and to us: the paſſage is conciſe, the expreſſions figurative, and of conſequence obſcure; but the event has ſufficiently explained their meaning, to our unſpeakable happineſs and comfort, and to the exceeding riches of God's grace, in his kindneſs towards us through Jeſus Chriſt. But dark as this oracle was to *Adam*, it contained the promiſe of a future ſtate, and nothing leſs could be inferred from it: the ſentence of death, which had formerly been threatned, is now ratified againſt him, and yet a promiſe of pardon is given:

given: as therefore his ſin was not pardoned in this world, if ever it is pardoned, it muſt be pardoned in the next. On this original promiſe, made unto our father, all our hopes of futurity are founded; from this ſource all our knowledge of it is derived.

The Covenant with *Abraham* was but a repetition of the Promiſe that had been given to *Adam*, principally intended of future bleſſings, and was underſtood by *Abraham* to imply ſo much: for it is the Apoſtle's obſervation, that *Abraham*, as well as the reſt of the Patriarchs, *died in faith, not having received the promiſes.* Little doubt will perhaps be made, that *Abraham* had a clearer and more comprehenſive view of the bleſſing to be derived on all mankind thro' his ſeed according to the fleſh, than had been given in any preceding period of the world, when we remember what our Saviour ſays, that *Abraham rejoiced to ſee his day, and ſaw it, and was glad:* and St. *Paul* declares, that *the Goſpel was preached before unto Abraham.* So true it is, as our Church teaches, that the ancient fathers did look for more than tranſitory promiſes; and they had a ſufficient foundation for their faith, ſtrong enough to bear all the weight they laid upon it. The *Jews* indeed, after the Law was given, in a vain conceit of being the peculiar favourites of heaven, were deſirous to appropriate this bleſſing to themſelves, and imagined the Promiſe, as well as the Law, deſigned for the family of *Abraham* only. But whatever they may think, the Law was but a temporary proviſion to convey theſe promiſes to ſucceeding generations, deſigned only to

laſt

laſt till the promiſed ſeed ſhould come, in whom they were to receive their full completion. Their hopes, and our hopes, the hopes of all mankind, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, muſt ſtand upon the ſame foundation that *Adam*'s did. It was not the intention of Providence to give the children of *Abraham* an intereſt in his favour above the reſt of the ſons of *Adam:* the fullneſs of time was not yet come for unfolding the ſcene of our redemption at large; and therefore, with regard to their future expectations, they were left to ſupport themſelves with thoſe general promiſes that had been given to *Adam*, and confirmed with *Abraham*. And this is perhaps the true reaſon why no expreſs promiſe is made of a future ſtate in the Law of *Moſes*. In this reſpect God acted with the ſtricteſt impartiality, ſhewed himſelf to be the God of the *Gentiles* as well as the God of the *Jews*, an equal father to all his children. 'Tis not my buſineſs to point out the miſtakes the *Jews* have made in the application of theſe promiſes: 'tis ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe to obſerve, that whether they took theſe promiſes wrong, or whether they took them right; whether they claimed under the Law of *Moſes*, or the Covenant of *Abraham*; ſtill a promiſe of God, whether real or imaginary, was the foundation of their hopes: they never reaſoned from any other topic, never believed on any other motive, than the authority of God. Diſmiſſing therefore this article, upon which enough has been ſaid, let us proceed to conſider how the caſe ſtood with the Gentile world.

We will ſuppoſe then, till better reaſon ſhall appear to the contrary, that ſome faint hopes at leaſt of future happineſs were intimated, tho' but darkly intimated, to *Adam* at his fall, derived from *Adam* to *Noah*, and carried by the ſons of *Noah* into the ſeveral quarters of the world, at their diſperſion from *Babel:* and as this diſperſion happened before the call of *Abraham*, and it does not appear that any new revelation was given to *Noah*, or any particular explanation of the old one, the promiſe to *Adam*, with all its obſcurities, was the only foundation of their future hopes: and as all mankind had quickly corrupted their ways, loſt the knowledge of the true God, and a ſenſe of the true Religion, the doctrine of a future ſtate did ſuffer in this general corruption, and was greatly altered and diſguiſed, tho' it could not wholly be obliterated. Some confuſed hopes of an hereafter were preſerved, and conveyed down by tradition to ſucceeding generations; but the promiſe of God, the ground of thoſe hopes, was loſt in the conveyance. This perhaps, if duly conſidered, will be found the beſt account that can be given of the univerſality of this notion, and the obſcurity in which it was involved. A notion ſo common to all the ſons of men muſt be derived from ſome common ſource; and they who reject the account which the Scriptures give, will not be able to aſſign a better. Sacred writ in this point, however, has the concurrent teſtimony of profane; and the hiſtory of *Moſes* is indirectly ſupported by the authority of *Cicero:* He tells us, * that tho' to him it was very

* Tuſc. Diſp. lib. I. c. 16, 17.

probable

probable others had in paſt ages believed the eternity of the ſoul, yet *Pherecydes Syrius* was the firſt upon record that did aſſert it, and *Plato* the firſt who brought an argument to prove it. † *Antiqui rationem ſententiæ ſuæ non fere reddebant*, &c. They gave no reaſon, for they had none to give: the authority of the tradition was reaſon enough, and they required no other. *Cicero* indeed, for want of knowing better, aſcribes this notion to natural inſtinct. Nature, he ſays, told mankind there was a future ſtate, but left reaſon to find out what it was; and that ignorance of the particulars of this future ſtate gave riſe to the ſtories of the lower regions, and thoſe other terrors, which in his time were ſo generally and ſo juſtly deſpiſed §. He adds moreover, in another place, that the ancients, as approaching nearer to their divine original and production, had better opportunities of diſcerning the truth *. This account but ill agrees with natural impreſſions, if any ſuch there were, which could not be ſo eaſily worn out, but would remain equally ſtrong, equally clear in the laſt generations of men, as in the firſt; but it moſt exactly ſuits the nature of tradition, and is a ſtrong confirmation of the Scripture ſtory.

Let us but imagine a promiſe of God, given to our firſt parents, as *Moſes* relates, to be by them conveyed to their immediate deſcendants, and ſo on by tradition to ſucceeding generations, eſpecially ſo dark and conciſe as this, without any written records to preſerve it: the

† Tuſc. Diſp. lib. I. c. 16, 17. § Ibid. c. 16. * Ibid. c. 12.

nearer

nearer men lived to the giving of this promiſe, in the greater purity it would be received, and in every remove from this period the impreſſion would grow weaker, and the idea more confuſed; and while one undertook to explain obſcurities, and another to ſupply defects, the original revelation would by degrees be buried under a load of fable, thrown upon it by the inventions of men; and the more diſtant and remote ages would receive the traditionary tale cloathed in all theſe fictitious circumſtances, picked up in its paſſage thro' a multitude of hands and a long tract of time. This was, we find, in fact the caſe, which is ſo ill reſolved by *Cicero:* and ſince, as he aſſures us, it was not received as the deduction of reaſon, and cannot be accounted for from natural inſtinct, it muſt have been received upon the authority of tradition; and upon this foot it ſubſiſted to the time of *Plato*, even by the confeſſion of *Plato* himſelf *. By this time indeed tradition began to be conſidered as too blind a guide to be truſted in a point of this importance: they could neither trace up to its original, nor the means of its conveyance. The uncertainty of the tradition having weakened its authority, they wanted ſome ſurer ground of hope; and *Plato* endeavoured to eſtabliſh the certainty of a future ſtate upon more ſolid principles and convincing proof: but having loſt ſight of

* Vid. *Law*'s Conſiderations on Religion, p. 130, *&c.* in the Notes; where this point is inconteſtably proved by numerous paſſages extracted from *Plato* by that learned Writer. We may indeed in general obſerve, that tradition was the principle into which the Heathens reſolved their religious belief, and cuſtom the argument by which they defended the abſurdities of their worſhip. *Tull.* de N. D. lib. III. c. 2, 4. De Divin. lib. II. c. 33. *Origen* contra *Celſum*, lib. VII. p. 350. Ed. Spen. *Min. Felix*, ſect. 5. Ed. Dav.

the only argument by which it could be proved, he was forced to ſubſtitute in the room of it the beſt that he could find; laudable his intention, but unſucceſsful the attempt. His arguments were oppoſed by *Ariſtotle* as ſoon as they were publiſhed; ſucceeding philoſophers divided upon the queſtion; and as each man made his own reaſon the ſtandard of abſtract truths, they could neither fix upon any principles, nor agree in the concluſion. This naturally ſplit them into a variety of ſects, and a variety of ſyſtems, numerous as the fancies of men, fallible as the principle from which they flowed: the effect was, the wranglings of the ſchools filled the whole world with uncertainty and confuſion; unſettled old principles, without leaving new ones in their room; increaſed their doubts, inſtead of confirming their hopes; and, as *Cotta* in *Cicero* tells the *Stoic*, after his long harangue upon the being of a God, *rem minime dubiam*, i. e. upon the foot of tradition, *argumentando dubiam fecerunt*.

Here then it will not be improper to obſerve the origin of theſe natural arguments; how late their date, how ſhort their courſe: called in at firſt to ſupply the want, or, more properly ſpeaking, the loſs of revelation; yet quickly ſlighted, as not anſwering the purpoſe for which they were produced: *Plato* was the firſt that invented, *Tully* almoſt the laſt who uſed them.

From *Plato* to *Tully* was little better than 300 years; a period the moſt enlightened of any in the heathen world, when mankind were daily improving their reaſon, and refining their philoſophy. During this period the point was debated with a ſerioufneſs and ſolicitude equal to the im-

portance of the queſtion; the arguments were canvaſſed by the learned of every ſect, and in the concluſion univerſally rejected by all. We have *Tully*'s authority for what I ſay. After he had alledged an argument of *Plato*'s, and another of his own, for the immortality of the ſoul, ſenſible of their weakneſs, he is obliged to confeſs, they could neither ſatisfy himſelf nor any body elſe: *Catervæ venient contradicentium, nec ſolum Epicureorum, ſed neſcio quomodo, doctiſſimus quiſque contemnit* *. Had theſe words of *Tully* been duly conſidered, or well remembered, they might have prevented a miſtake which runs thro' every writer upon this ſubject. It has been aſſerted, that the immortality of the ſoul was believed in all ages and all places, more eſpecially by the beſt and wiſeſt of mankind, and only oppoſed by a few *Epicureans*, who were weak reaſoners in other reſpects. The words of *Tully* are full and expreſs to the contrary: they were neither few, nor fools, who oppoſed this doctrine: their numbers are expreſſed in the word *catervæ*, their ſenſe and judgment in the word *doctiſſimus*; they were not *Epicureans* only, but the learned in general, *doctiſſimus quiſque*. But excluſive of *Tully*'s authority, 'tis evident to any man, who will look into the ſyſtems of the ancient philoſophers, that, excepting *Pythagoras*, *Plato* and his followers were ſingular in aſſerting the immortality of the ſoul: the other ſects, like the *Stoics* and *Peripatetics*, maintained the contrary; or, like the *Pyrrhoniſts* and *Academics*, remained neuter. And now a queſtion will naturally occur, if indeed it can be made a queſtion: The old tradition had been long diſcarded, as

* Tuſc. Diſp. lib. I. c. 31.

too groſs for the credulity of women and children *; the more refined ſyſtem which *Plato* offered, with the arguments that ſupported it, were likewiſe rejected by learned men, who were beſt able to feel the force of them; and if the world believed nor one nor t'other, what was it they did believe? The matter of fact will ſpeak for itſelf. A belief of futurity had ſtood its ground, upon the authority of tradition, blind as that tradition was, for a term of 3500 years; but when men began to reaſon upon the caſe, reaſon was ſo far from ſtrengthening this belief, that the little notion they had in the world was quickly reaſoned out of it, and inſtead of laying a ſurer foundation of hope, it left them none at all. It muſt however be acknowledged, in juſtice to them, that they ſhewed a candid and generous diſpoſition in their reſearches after truth: they ſought for certainty and conviction, but would have been glad of probability, could they have told on which ſide it lay: willing to believe, but unable to prove, ſtrong were their wiſhes, but their arguments were weak.

To conclude this head: It appears, I hope, by this deduction, that the knowledge of a future ſtate was originally communicated by revelation, and the belief of it preſerved in the Heathen world, ſo long as it was preſerved, by tradition. But tradition at laſt ſunk beneath the load of thoſe abſurd fictions that were laid upon it: reaſon then took up the point, and endeavoured to maintain it as long as it would bear; but the arguments from reaſon never ſatisfied the inquiſitive: till, wandering over all the mazes

* Quæ eſt anus, tam delira, quæ timeat iſta, &c. *Tuſc. Diſp.* lib. I. c. 21.

Eſſe aliquos manes et ſubterranea regna,
Nec pueri credunt.— *Juv.* Sat. II. v. 149, &c.

of

of philoſophy, and tired in the fruitleſs ſearch, mankind let drop their hopes, becauſe neither reaſon nor tradition could ſupport them any longer. In this uncomfortable, deſponding ſtate, living without God, and dying without hope, as St. *Paul* aſſerts and themſelves confeſs, mankind continued during the remains of Heatheniſm in the world; as may be traced thro' all ſucceeding writers, from *Cicero* down to the times of *Macrobius*, in the latter end of the fourth century; when Chriſtianity was generally eſtabliſhed in the world, and the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt had ſhined into the hearts of men, diſpelled their doubts, relieved their fears, carried ſuch certainty and conviction with it, as filled them with joy and peace in believing, and gave eaſe and ſatisfaction to the labouring mind. It is of little conſequence to us to examine minutely their ſeveral arguments, which could not even convince themſelves, eſpecially when we have ſo much better of our own: it may perhaps be more to the purpoſe to inquire into the reaſons why they always miſſed that ſatisfaction, they ſo ardently wiſhed and ſo eagerly ſought; and the moſt obvious as well as trueſt reaſon is, that they ſought this ſatisfaction, where it was not to be found, *viz.* in the wiſdom of man, not in the promiſes of God. But to open this point a little farther: The great difficulty which puzzled the ancients in this inquiry, was the introduction of death into the world: they found mankind under the neceſſity of dying, without being able to aſſign the cauſe. Here they were gravelled; and no wonder: the reſolution of this queſtion depended upon the knowledge of matters of fact, which were only

preſerved

preſerved in the *Jewiſh* ſcriptures, and loſt to all the world beſides: they reaſoned therefore from a partial and imperfect view of the caſe, which will of neceſſity leave men in ignorance, or lead them to miſtakes; for, from principles that are falſe or precarious, nothing can reſult but error and uncertainty. It ſhould ſeem, methinks, a moſt unfeaſable attempt, to pretend to determine what was to be the end of man, without knowing any thing at all of his beginning, * or to ſay what was to become of him when he went out of this world, when they could give no account how he came into it. Death muſt firſt be aboliſhed, before life and immortality can be brought to light: and therefore it may juſtly ſeem the more wonderful, that Chriſtian writers, who had the Bible before their eyes, ſhould overlook ſo material a circumſtance, or pretend to demonſtrate a future ſtate, without taking the *Moſaic* hiſtory into the account: it is putting themſelves into the ſame ſituation with the Heathens of old; for which there can be no reaſon, becauſe it will ſerve no end: and they will moreover be reduced to this dilemma, that if they admit the *Moſaic* hiſtory, they muſt ground their argument upon the promiſes of God, and then they do not prove it from principles of reaſon; if they reject the *Moſaic* hiſtory, they will contradict revelation. The utmoſt that philoſophy pretends is to prove, that the ſoul ſubſiſts ſomewhere after death, they know not where, whilſt the body is given up to duſt and corruption: but, if we believe the Scriptures, the ſtate of death is a ſtate of puniſhment, inflicted by the poſitive appoint-

* *Vide* Origen, p. 412.

ment

ment of God: *Sin entered into the world, and death by ſin, and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for all have ſinned.* And then it will be difficult to conceive, and more difficult to prove, from principles of reaſon, or any principles at all, that man, who dies in his ſins, and departs this life under the wrath of God and the curſe of the law, has any plea or claim to everlaſting happineſs in the next. Admitting then the ſeparate exiſtence of the ſoul, while the body remains under the power and dominion of death, this being a ſtate of puniſhment, it cannot be a happy ſtate: the continuation of its exiſtence is but a lengthening of its miſery; ſo far from life and immortality, that it is, in Scripture language, moſt emphatically called *everlaſting deſtruction*, and *eternal death*. It is Chriſt has redeemed us from the curſe of the law: by the blood of his croſs he made our peace with God: by his ſtripes we are healed: human nature is recovered from the mortal wound which ſin had given it, and reſtored to that immortal life for which it was originally deſigned; a life that knows no end, and joys that know no bounds; called therefore in Scripture *everlaſting life*, *eternal life*, and ſometimes emphatically *life*. But for this, the redemption of Chriſt, the ſouls of fallen men, if they did ſurvive the diſſolution of the body, would be, like the fallen angels, *reſerved under chains of darkneſs unto the judgment of the great day*. And if this is all the future ſtate which the light of nature can diſcover, or the powers of nature can ſecure, good God defend us from ſuch an immortality! Better were it for mankind, if they had never been born, better die like the beaſts that periſh, and

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ſoul and body rot together in the grave, than live to endure ſuch an immortality as this: annihilation itſelf is a bleſſing in compariſon. This one defect is common to Chriſtian as well as Deiſtical writers upon this ſubject, that they think it ſufficient to prove the immortality of the ſoul from its immateriality, without attempting to account for the introduction of death, or relieve men from the power of it: yet theſe are preliminaries neceſſary to be ſettled in order to diſcuſs the preſent queſtion; and they who are ignorant of theſe particulars, and they who take no notice of them, (which comes to the ſame) muſt equally talk in the dark, underſtanding neither what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm; advancing nothing but bold aſſertions and random conjectures, while the whole argumentation is built upon metaphyſical ſubtilties, without truth in the premiſes, or certainty in the concluſion. Even in point of reaſon, as much can be ſaid againſt the immortality of the ſoul, as can poſſibly be ſaid for it; the philoſophical arguments can at leaſt be evaded, if they cannot be anſwered: but ſure it can be no hard matter to oppoſe metaphyſical ſubtilties to metaphyſical ſubtilties, and one logical quibble againſt another; and, if men will act rationally, the degrees of aſſent to any propoſition ſhould be anſwerable to the degrees of evidence for the truth of it; and, when the arguments on both ſides are equal, the mind muſt remain in doubt and ſuſpenſe, and incline to neither. But, if we examine theſe arguments by the teſt of Scripture, I believe, we may be bold to ſay, that no one argument ever yet was urged, or can be urged, for the certainty of a future

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ſtate, but what, if it does not proceed upon Chriſtian principles, will be found to contradict them. But the conſequences, I am afraid, reach farther. If a future happy ſtate can be diſcovered by the light of nature, there is an end of the Goſpel at once; our preaching is vain, the faith of the Chriſtian world is vain: a ſuppoſition this, which renders revelation uſeleſs and inſignificant, and defeats the purpoſes of Providence in giving it to the world. One great deſign of the Goſpel revelation was to relieve mankind from the perplexity they were in, and the uncertainty they were under, by giving them ſuch a full aſſurance of the world to come, as ſhould exclude all doubt, and ſet their hearts at reſt, by repoſing their future hopes and expectations on the promiſes of God, who cannot lye. There Chriſt and his Apoſtles reſted the proof of this point, and there it would be as wiſe in us to reſt it. The Apoſtles came not with enticing words of man's wiſdom, but in the demonſtration of the Spirit and of power, that the faith of Chriſtians ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of man, but the power of God. Upon this principle it was propoſed, and upon this principle it was received, at the promulgation of the Goſpel. When the Apoſtles held out the offer of life and immortality to all the nations of the earth, deſpiſing the vanities that had formerly amuſed them, the viſionary ſcenes of philoſophic ſyſtems, they gladly embraced, and eagerly cloſed with the glorious overture, becauſe they received it not as the word of men, but, as it was in truth, the word of God.

Upon the whole, the promiſes of God are the only foundation of our future hopes: no better can be had, no other can be wanted. The world has had ſufficient experience of what reaſon can do; and, before the Goſpel revelation, all other arguments were found inſufficient; with it, they are unneceſſary. How probable ſoever this point may ſeem from principles of reaſon, that probability muſt be tempered with doubts and miſgivings; and, though men will be poſitive, they never can be ſure. Feeble and languid muſt be the hopes of the Infidel, if any hopes he has, built upon theſe metaphyſical reaſonings, compared with the full aſſurance of a Chriſtian's faith, the joy that fills his breaſt, the raptures that warm his heart, when he ſees all heaven open to his view, and his God and Saviour gone before to prepare a place for him in his Father's houſe. What then remains? but giving back theſe arguments to thoſe who want them, let us build ourſelves up in our moſt holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghoſt, and keep ourſelves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life. *Amen.*

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